

Message Text

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S/S - MR. ORTIZ

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TAGS: SOPN, PINT, US, UR, PFOR

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith FULL TEXT EVANS AND NOVAK OP-ED COLUMN WASHINGTON POST TUESDAY FEBRUARY 24 HEADED "DEALING WITH DISCREDITED DETENTE."

2. CLOSE ADVISERS OF PRESIDENT FORD, AGONIZING OVER POSSIBLE PRIMARY DEFEATS OF THE PRESIDENT, ARE EYEING A NEW, HARD-LINE FOREIGN POLICY AIMED SQUARELY AT THE SOVIET UNION AS ONE WAY OF REVERSING THE TIDE.

3. INDEED, A DISTINCT MINORITY OF THESE ADVISERS BELIEVE THAT SUCH A DRAMATIC PRESIDENTIAL SWITCH AWAY FROM DETENTE COULD CONCEIVABLY WORK ONLY IF REINFORCED WITH A COMPANION MOVE: THE REPLACEMENT OF SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY KISSINGER, ORIGINAL ARCHITECT ALONG WITH FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON OF THE NOW-TARNISHED POLICY OF DETENTE.

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4. OTHER PRESIDENTIAL INTIMATES STRONGLY DISSENT, CLAIMING

THAT, ALTHOUGH KISSINGER'S STANDING IN CONGRESS AND THE WASHINGTON BUREAUCRACY HAS PLUMMETTED, HE IS STILL THE LUSTERLESS ADMINISTRATION'S BRIGHTEST STAR OUT IN THE HINTERLAND WHOSE OUSTER WOULD BACKFIRE ON THE PRESIDENT,

ESPECIALLY IN THE GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN.

5. JUST HOW DISCREDITED DETENTE HAS BECOME IN THE EYES OF RANK-AND-FILE VOTERS IS SHOCKINGLY CLEAR FROM HIGHLY REPUTABLE POLLS TAKEN OVER THE PAST FEW WEEKS BY VARIOUS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IN THE PRIMARY STATES OF NEW HAMPSHIRE AND MASSACHUSETTS. ONE SUCH SAMPLE SHOWS THE TREND.

6. ITEM: THE KEY QUESTION ASKING WHETHER DETENTE HAS FAVORED MOSCOW, WASHINGTON OR BOTH EQUALLY RECEIVED THESE RESPONSES FROM A STATISTICALLY SOUND SAMPLE IN MASSACHUSETTS, SEN. GEORGE MCGOVERN'S ONLY WINNING STATE FOUR YEARS AGO: FAVORED THE SOVIET UNION, NEARLY 70 PER CENT; FAVORED THE U.S., LESS THAN 5 PER CENT; FAVORED NEITHER, LESS THAN 3 PER CENT.

7. ITEM: ANOTHER KEY QUESTION ASKING WHETHER THE U.S. HAS BEEN TOO TOUGH, TOO EASY OR JUST ABOUT RIGHT IN ITS SOVIET POLICY BROUGHT THIS RESPONSE FROM MASSACHUSETTS VOTERS: NEARLY 70 PER CENT "TOO EASY," LESS THAN 2 PER CENT "TOO TOUGH."

8. SUCH FINDINGS IN DOVISH NEW ENGLAND HELP EXPLAIN THE RISING ATTACK ON THE FORD-KISSINGER POLICY OF DETENTE BY SUCH NON-DOVISH PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AS SEN. HENRY M. JACKSON, DEMOCRAT, AND RONALD REAGAN, REPUBLICAN.

9. UP TO NOW, MR. FORD HAS MADE NOT THE SLIGHTEST CONCESSION DESPITE REAGAN'S HARD-LINE SPEECH IN EXETER, N.H., EARLIER THIS MONTH. REAGAN CHARGED THAT THE MILITARY BALANCE HAS BEEN SHIFTING TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION SINCE 1970 "THROUGH THE YEARS OF SO-CALLED DETENTE."

10. IN HIS RECENT CAMPAIGNING, MR. FORD HAS SEEMED ON
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THE DEFENSIVE OVER THE REAGAN ATTACKS ON DETENTE, CLAIMING THAT U.S. MILITARY STRENGTH HAS "REASSURED OUR ALLIES" (A DUBIOUS PROPOSITION TO SOME OF THOSE ALLIES) AND THAT HIS OWN REPUTATION DURING A QUARTER CENTURY IN CONGRESS WAS THAT OF "A TOUGH YANKEE TRADER."

11. SOME PRESIDENTIAL ADVISERS BELIEVE THAT IF MR. FORD LOSES THE EARLY PRIMARIES, ONLY A REVERSION TO A HARD-

LINE SOVIET POLICY COULD SET THE POLITICAL STAGE FOR RE-COUPING HIS FALLEN FORTUNES IN LATER PRIMARIES. THEY FEEL--AND DISPLAY THE POLLS AS EVIDENCE-- THAT THE IMPACT ON U.S. VOTERS OF THE SOVIET DECISION TO TRAIN, SUPPLY AND USE CUBAN MERCENARIES IN ANGOLA, 8,000 MILES FROM MOSCOW, HAS BEEN SHARP ENOUGH TO MAKE SUCH A SWITCH CREDIBLE AND WIDELY ACCEPTABLE.

12. BUT IN ADDITION TO THIS PURELY POLITICAL RATIONALE (WHICH MR. FORD HIMSELF HAS BY NO MEANS ADOPTED), A DEEPER JUSTIFICATION FOR GOING HARD-LINE ON MOSCOW IS ALSO UNDER DISCUSSION AT HIGH LEVELS OF THE ADMINISTRATION: THAT IF THE PERCEPTION TAKES HOLD ABROAD THAT MR. FORD IS INDEED BEING DEFEATED BY REAGAN FOR THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION, HE WILL BE QUICKLY TRANSFORMED FROM ONE OF THE WEAKEST PRESIDENTS TO THE WEAKEST OF ALL IN U.S. HISTORY.

13. HE SUFFERS NOW AS THE FIRST PRESIDENT NEVER NATIONALLY ELECTED, BUT IF HE APPEARS TO BE LOSING TO REAGAN, THAT WEAKNESS WOULD BE GRAVELY DEEPENED. HE WOULD FIND HIMSELF BARGAINING WITH MOSCOW--FOR A SECOND STRATEGIC ARMS AGREEMENT (SALT), FOR ONE EXAMPLE--FROM A HIGHLY VULNERABLE POSITION, WITH MOSCOW CORRESPONDINGLY STRENGTHENED.

14. ONE TOP PRO-FORD REPUBLICAN LEADER TOLD US THIS CHILLING PROSPECT HAS "KEPT ME LYING AWAKE IN THE DARK OF NIGHT, WORRYING WHO WILL GOVERN OUR COUNTRY IF THE PRESIDENT STARTS LOSING THE NOMINATION BATTLE." HE FORESEES A DANGEROUS POWER VACUUM, WITH THE DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS, ANTI-FORD AND WORKING ON ITS OWN ELECTION, BECOMING EVER MORE INTRANSIGENT ON FOREIGN POLICY.

15. IN SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE, A PRESIDENTIAL DECISION TO HARDEN THE LINE ON MOSCOW, REFUSE FURTHER CONCESSIONS ON

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SALT II AND EXPLOIT THE RAMPANT ANTI-DETENTE MOOD MIGHT BE SEEN NOT ONLY AS A REFLEXIVE POLITICAL REACTION BUT ALSO AS AN ESSENTIAL HOLDING PATTERN UNTIL THE NEW PRESIDENT TAKES COMMAND. (END TEXT) INGERSOLL

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